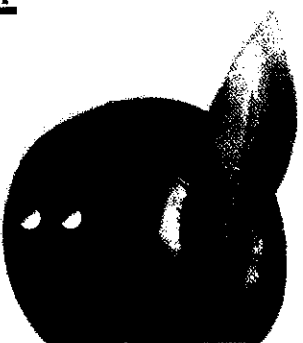


Teachers, teachers, everywhere!

In elementary school you wondered about which teacher you would have next year. In middle school you may have to get to know a different teacher for every class. That's 4, 5 or more teachers every year!



Make a list of your new teachers. Then, write down the subject(s) they teach.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

They're all different.

Teachers are people. That means no two are the same. Chances are you'll like some better than others. But keep in mind they're all on your side!

Study your teachers.

Learn about their expectations and what they like and don't like. For example, maybe you have a teacher who values neatness or another who likes to talk about sports or current events.

Speak up!

One thing's for sure, your teachers will never really get to know you if you never open your mouth. Sure, some teachers will be easier to talk with than others—but they're all there to help you out!



Middle school means choices and more choices!

There's a lot more happening in middle school than just books and reports. Some examples include:

Athletics

Maybe you're already into sports, so the idea of joining the baseball, football or soccer team is a given. Or maybe you're interested in trying a new sport. If so, middle school may be the perfect place to start. (Keep in mind that sports can be a big commitment.)

The arts

Got a love for music? Why not join the chorus or choir? If you play an instrument, think about joining the school band or orchestra. Or, maybe you're interested in crafts, shop, dance or other forms of art.

Clubs, organizations and hobby groups

Lots of middle schools have debate teams, chess clubs, student government and other activities. There may also be opportunities for groups of kids who are into photography, stamps, computers, small business, etc. If you want to start a new group, talk to a teacher or advisor who might be willing to help.

Making choices you can live with

Having lots of interests is a good thing. Middle school is a great time to try new things. But there's only so much time in a day. So it's important not to take on more than you can handle! Use the columns to the right to put possible extracurricular activities in order of interest. Don't be afraid to move things around as the school year gets going.

Definitely

Probably

Maybe

Be sure to keep in mind how your after-school activities will affect things like study time, time for friends and family, and time to relax and sleep.

Making friends

Work your way through the maze to discover some tips about making friends—and about being one, too!

Start →

Friendships in middle school are often deeper and more intense than when you were younger.

New friends don't appear by magic. Sometimes you have to take the first step—with a smile, a hello or a question.

Being a good friend means respecting each other's unique qualities.

The best way to make friends is to be yourself. Real friends like you for who you are.

After-school activities are a good way to meet potential friends.

A friend is someone you feel safe sharing your true feelings with.

Friends often have things in common. But you can also admire, respect and connect with kids who have different backgrounds, talents and goals.

Finish

I'm Hollis.

I thought I could count on Erica.

Back in elementary school we used to do everything together. Just last summer we talked about how fun it would be to go to the same middle school. I guess Erica's plans changed.

The first few days of middle school were OK, but after a week or two Erica started hanging out with Jenna and some girls I didn't know. I wouldn't mind so much, but Erica started to act like I didn't even exist. And it seems like Erica's changed. She's started to wear makeup like Jenna and those other girls. I don't think her mom even knows.

I tried sitting with her at lunch to talk about it, but Erica hardly said a word to me. She and Jenna were too busy making fun of some of the kids in orchestra—the ones who have to carry their instruments around all the time.

Hollis' story

Coping with cliques (groups of friends that are closed to outsiders)

Erica and Jenna's clique seems to have a code of its own. Why do you think that's so?

Why do you think the members of Jenna and Erica's clique make fun of other kids?

What are some of the risks Erica is taking in order to fit in with Jenna and the others?

Decision Guide

Making decisions really means making choices. As a middle school student, you'll be faced with lots of decisions—from whether or not to try out for the school play to deciding who to have as friends and whether or not to use alcohol, tobacco and other drugs.

Step 1—Get the facts.

For example, suppose a friend asks you to try out for the soccer team. Ask yourself:

- ☐ How much practice is involved?
- ☐ Am I really interested in soccer, or do I just want to please my friend?
- ☐ What activities might get neglected if I add soccer practices and games to my schedule?

It's funny because I thought Erica liked music. She said she'd come with me to orchestra tryouts, but when I got there, no Erica! I ended up sitting next to this girl who played viola. Her name was Georgia and she seemed pretty nice. But she was one of the kids Jenna and Erica were making fun of at lunch. I was so embarrassed.

Anyway, I just couldn't deal with the idea of losing Erica. I thought it might help if I tried to fit in a little better with her new friends, so the other day I decided I'd try wearing a little makeup myself. I snuck some from my mom, which made me feel a little bad. But that was nothing compared to when I walked up to Jenna and Erica, and all Jenna could manage to say was "A little weak on the eyeliner." Erica wouldn't even look at me.

When I got to orchestra rehearsal I was so upset. But Georgia had saved a seat for me, and when I sat down she peeked over and said my makeup looked nice with the color of my sweater.

Why do you think Hollis' attempts to fit in didn't work?

What does Georgia offer to Hollis that Jenna and Erica don't?

Step 2—Go over your options.

Write down your options about joining the soccer team. Then write out the possible pros (good things) and cons (bad things) of each decision.

1. _____	Pro _____	Con _____
	Pro _____	Con _____
	Pro _____	Con _____
2. _____	Pro _____	Con _____
	Pro _____	Con _____
	Pro _____	Con _____

Step 3—Decide.

Make a deadline and decide on the choice you think is best. Try to make a choice that will work for you in the long run—something that will make you feel best over time, even if it's a little uncomfortable now.

I'll decide by _____.

If your choice doesn't work out, go back to your options and pick what you think is the next best option.

I'll try sticking to my decision until _____ (date) before deciding whether or not it works.

Your decisions are a reflection of you. So it's important to practice making decisions that will make you proud!

"Real" time

versus

"Reel" time

What's the message?

The make-believe world of entertainment often sends the message that alcohol, tobacco and other drugs are safe—and that using them will make you popular. But, that's a "reel" mistake.

What's the truth?

Alcohol, tobacco and other drugs (like marijuana) are very dangerous. Young people who use any of this stuff have a greater risk of becoming sick, injured and addicted (hooked). In spite of what you sometimes see in the media, drugs are not the pathway to popularity. That's the "real" story.

Lines worth remembering

Playing a successful role in middle school means getting your facts straight. Use the code on the right to complete the following "real" statements.

- Kids who think it's safe to try a smoke or a drink just once or twice are just plain _____ uses some
- Many of the teens who attempt _____ are also involved with alcohol and other drugs.
- The hidden message in many movies, songs and ads is that _____ kind of drug. Nothing could be further from the _____.
- People who drink a lot of alcohol in a short period of time can die of alcohol _____.
- Friends who don't use drugs can help each other resist _____ to take a drink or a smoke.
- Nicotine is the main _____ in tobacco. It can cause heart and lung _____.
- It takes _____ to learn to firmly, but politely say no to tobacco, alcohol and other drugs. Ask a family member or friend to _____ with you.

Secret code

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
♥	+	♣	♠	✱	◆	◇	★	✱	☼	☆	●	○	■	□	☆	✱	✱	▲	▼	◆	♣	♠	▲	♥	♠

Advice for new middle school students about peer pressure

Dear Brad,

You know how important it is for middle school kids to feel like they fit in. The problem is some of my new friends are into sneaking cigarettes and beer. I don't want to get into that stuff. What can I do to fit in and keep my friends?

—*Pressured in Portland*

Dear Brad,

I want to be my own person. But I also want to have friends. A lot of kids are into wearing shoes, clothing and hairstyles that make them look a lot older. I'm worried people won't think I'm cool if I don't look like everyone else.

—*Frustrated by Fashion*

Dear Pressured,

You're right. It's important for middle school students to feel like they fit in. But not at the cost of your health and your future. If it's just a couple of friends trying to pressure you, look to your other friends to take your side and help turn the pressure around. There's strength in numbers! Facing the pressure alone takes more courage, but it beats giving in and doing stuff you'll regret later on.

Dear Frustrated,

Lots of middle school students get caught up in comparing clothing, watches, backpacks and other "things." But none of these items make you cool or uncool—it's the person inside that counts the most. And keep in mind that fashion trends change all the time. That's because they're sold to kids by people who have one goal in mind—to make money. It's OK not to buy into the latest clothing hype. Really!

Peer pressure comes in all shapes and sizes.

Sometimes it's right in your face, like when a kid at lunch is pressuring you to skip class with her. Other times it's just below the surface, like when you feel you have to act like you're not interested in school because that's how kids in the in-crowd act.

You don't have to fold.

Use a little humor.

You can say something funny to break the tension. For example, if someone tries to get you to drink beer, say, "No way. I'm allergic to suds."

Make an excuse.

For example, "No, thanks, smoking will get me kicked off the track team," or "Sorry, I'm late for History. Gotta run."

Be firm.

A polite, confident "No," or "Thanks, but no thanks," often does the trick.

What would you do?

Quiz

Getting along

Let's face it, you're going to have disagreements with people from time to time—even with some of your best friends. Learning the right way to work through conflicts is a sign you're growing up.



What would you do?

Check the best answer to each statement. Briefly explain why. Then check out the answers on page 7 to learn what the best options are and why.



You find out your friend Lee has chosen the same science topic as you for his midyear report. But the teacher wants everyone to work on different topics. Do you:

- A.** Get angry and demand Lee change his topic?
- B.** Change your topic without letting Lee know you were disappointed?
- C.** Talk to Lee about why he chose the topic, and ask him to listen to why you chose it, too?

Why is this the right thing to do?

Kids are saying a new girl in school, Carla, has been spreading rumors about you. You could:

- A.** Decide to never speak to Carla as long as you live.
- B.** Request that a peer mediator (or a school counselor) help you and Carla uncover the problem and help think of ways to solve it.
- C.** Start spreading rumors about Carla.

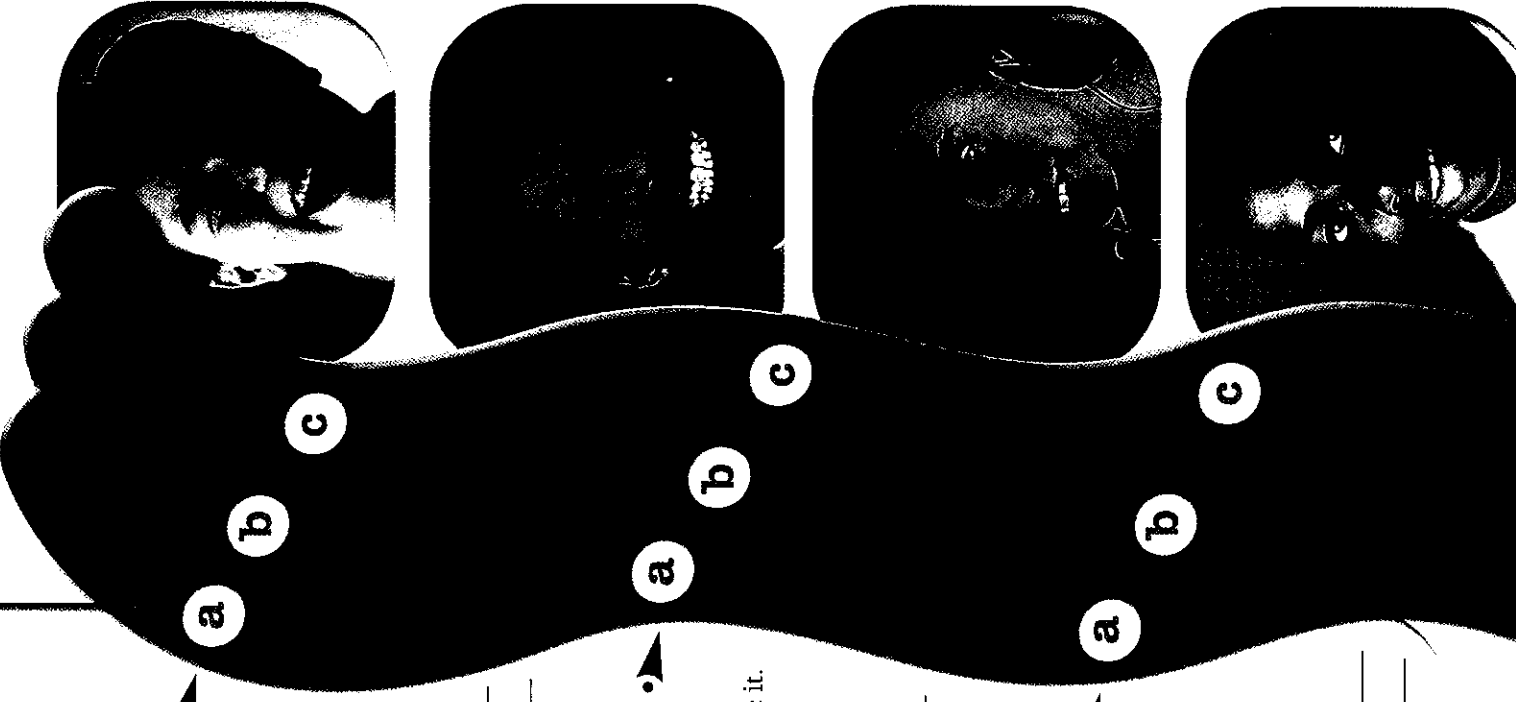
Why is this the right thing to do?

You're standing in the lunch line when a kid cuts in front of you.

You can:

- A.** Make a nasty comment.
- B.** Politely ask the person if there's a reason he or she is in a hurry—if not, ask the person to wait his or her turn.
- C.** Stay quiet and keep your feelings inside.

Why is this the right thing to do?



How you say it

is as important as what you have to say.

Be clear and direct.

State your point of view using “I” statements, not “you” statements. Keep your focus on the conflict, not on personalities. Come up with an “I” statement you could use with Lee in the first example on page 18:

Be a good listener.

Listening to the other person is the first step toward meeting him or her halfway. Suggest a compromise you could reach with Carla in the second example on page 18:

Watch your body language.

All the “I” statements in the world won’t do any good if you say them with your arms crossed and a frown on your face. Take time to calm down before talking with the other person.

Don’t yell or scream.

You may have some great points to make, but no one will hear them if you raise your voice.

**Resort to fights and expect
yourself to
earn a whole bunch
of trouble—it’s not
worth the bother.
It’s not the way to get along!**

For the way to
get along, fold
so “B” arrows
meet “A” arrows.



A

B

comics Bullybusters

Feeling safe in and around school

